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# Falguière, Alexandre

(b Toulouse, Sept 7, 1831; d Paris, April 19, 1900).

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French sculptor and painter. His father, a cabinetmaker, sent him in 1844 to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Toulouse, where he won the city's major prize and was awarded a grant to study at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. There he was François Jouffroy's pupil but considered himself a follower of François Rude. In order to have enough to live on while studying, he also worked for Albert-Ernst Carrier-Belleuse and Jean-Louis Chenillion (1810–78). In 1859 he was joint winner with Léon Cugnot (1835–94) of the Prix de Rome, for the bas-relief of the *Wounded Mezentius aided by his Son Lausus* (plaster, Paris, Ecole N. Sup. B.-A.). While studying at the Académie de France in Rome, he came under the influence of his fellow student Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux. He remained in Italy until 1865.

The spontaneity of Falguière's approach to composition, and his handling of materials, were in tune with the official taste of the period; in spite of protests from the Académie Impériale about an excess of 'realism' in his works, the sculptures he sent to Paris were readily purchased by the State. They included the *Winner of the Cockfight* (bronze, exh. Salon 1864; Paris, Mus. d'Orsay); *Nuccia the Trasteverine Girl* (bronze, 1864; untraced); and *Omphale* (marble, exh. Salon 1866; Paris, Min. Indust., garden). This last work initiated the magnificent series of female figures with mythological names but modern bodies, such as *Eve* (marble, 1880; Copenhagen, Ny Carlsberg Glyp.), *Diana* (1887) and *Hunting Nymph* (1888; both marble, Toulouse, Mus. Augustins). At the same time he continued the Salon tradition of slender youths in his recumbent figure of the Christian martyr *Tarcisius*; its plaster version was awarded a medal at the 1867 Salon, and the marble version (Paris, Mus. d'Orsay) was awarded the medal of honour at the 1868 Salon.

Falguière worked fast; thus in December 1870 he modelled in snow a statue of *Resistance* on the ramparts of Paris while the city was being besieged by the Prussians (bronze cast of later sketch model, Los Angeles, CA, Co. Mus. A.). He subsequently received the Légion d'honneur and other official honours, being appointed a professor at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in 1882 and being elected that same year to the Académie des Beaux-Arts. He always completed his commissions punctually and exhibited regularly from 1857 to 1899. He was immensely popular and prolific (with the help of five workshops), and his work was to be seen everywhere, in public and private sites.

Among Falguière's many sculptures for public buildings, to which his spirited, neo-Baroque style was well suited, were the statue *Drama* (stone, 1869; Paris, Opéra); the group the *Seine and its Tributaries* (plaster, 1878; Paris, Pal. Trocadero, destr.); the great quadriga group the *Triumph of the Revolution* (plaster, 1882; Paris, Arc de Triomphe de l'Etoile, destr. 1886; wax maquette, Paris, Mus. d'Orsay); the statue *Heroic Poetry* (marble, 1893; Toulouse, Capitole); and the huge and ambitious *Monument to the French Revolution* (plaster, 1890–1900; Paris, Panthéon, destr.). He produced other allegorical monuments, not linked with buildings, as well as providing many of the monuments to great Frenchmen past and present set up by the Third Republic as part of its programme of public education. These included the monuments to *Alphonse de Lamartine* (bronze, 1877; Macon, Promenade du Sud); *Pierre Corneille* (marble, 1878; Paris, Comédie-Française); and *Ambroise Thomas* (marble, 1900; Paris, Parc Monceau). What might have been among his most attractive works in this vein, the monument to

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*Claude Lorrain*, intended for Nancy, never got beyond the stage of a sketch model (plaster, 1886–9; Nancy, Mus. B.-A.). Falguière also executed a certain amount of religious sculpture, but this is on the whole less successful than his secular monuments or even his monuments to churchmen, for example that to *Dom Calmet* at Senones (stone, red granite and black marble, 1873; Senones, St Pierre–St Gaudelbert).

Falguière was a productive and accomplished portraitist. Among his numerous busts was that of the painter *Carolus-Duran* (bronze, 1876, untraced) and of the actress *Marie Heilbron* (bronze, 1851–86; Paris, Montparnasse cemetery, funerary chapel of Marie Heilbron). He also produced a number of paintings, and, though this was a secondary activity, he enjoyed considerable contemporary success with them. Some, such as *Cain and Abel* (1876; Carcassonne, Mus. B.-A.), reflected sculptural themes being explored at the same time. Others, such as *Begging Dwarfs*, *Souvenir of Granada* (1888; untraced), were independent productions and underline his predilection for 17th-century Spanish painting.

Falguière was one of the most successful and productive sculptors of the late 19th century in France, his salon exhibits being widely reproduced in bronze by the founders Thiebaut Frères, Fumière & Gavignot; in 1898 he had his one-man exhibition at the Nouveau Cirque, Paris. His robust style combined elements of fleshy realism with neo-Baroque verve of composition, and he found many imitators, particularly among those of his pupils who came from south-western France and were known as 'les Toulousains'; they included Paul Gasq, Laurent Marqueste (1848–1920), Antonin Mercié, Denys Puech and Felix Soulés.

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## See also

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France, §iv, 5(i): Sculpture, c 1814–c 1900: Influence of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts

## External resources

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